



# McGill

School of  
**Communication Sciences  
and Disorders**

École des  
**sciences de la  
communication humaine**



Dear Students,

I write to you today with news that we must absorb and process to prepare for the unwelcome and still uncertain reality imposed by the COVID19 crisis. To ready ourselves to move forward, we must plan for the possibility that normal operations in our school will probably not resume before the fall term. Therefore, I must communicate to you our contingency plan for the probable cancellation of the spring practicum (first year class) and summer internship (second year class), even though we cannot yet announce with certainty that these cancellations will occur.

First, I will speak to the issue of continuing with the spring and summer clinical placements as planned. You will be hearing many announcements from the Government of Quebec that give the impression that these placements may continue. Schools are expected to reopen on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Other services are expected to resume at intervals between May 1<sup>st</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup>. The Ministry of Health is holding talks regarding the re-integration of stagiaires into the health system. However, it is important to understand that the higher education institutions in Quebec (all of them, not just McGill University) are indicating to the government that the conditions to permit resumption of clinical practice activities may not come together in time. The conditions pertain to: (1) health and safety of learners; (2) accreditation requirements; (3) feasibility and equity for all students; and (4) impact of reintegration of stagiaires on frontline health care workers during an ongoing pandemic. The implication is that some parts of society will resume some semblance of normal operation when the “curve is flattened” but the epidemic will continue to have deep and ongoing impacts on the health care system over a much longer term. Taking into account these considerations, your Clinical Education Team is monitoring the situation closely so as to take advantage of the first opportunity to place you in your planned placements or new placements. Nonetheless, we find it prudent to have a contingency plan in place.

Regarding the contingency plan, I will provide a brief outline of the plan that is proposed for the first- year class, should the spring practicum be canceled. The plan involves switching the timing of academic courses and practicum hours so that you will graduate on time at the end of August 2021. The first part of the plan involves moving clinical practice days, as follows: (1) Move 12 days of clinical practicum from Spring 2020 to Winter 2021 by doubling your practicum days for the whole of the Winter 2021 term; (2) move 5 additional days of clinical practicum from Spring 2020 to Summer 2021, creating a 13 week Summer Internship. The second part of the plan involves moving academic courses to make space in the Winter 2021 term, specifically (3) teach SCSD 618 Research and Measurement Methodologies by remote instruction in Summer 2020; and (4) teach SCSD 616 Audiology lectures by remote instruction in the Summer of 2020; necessitating (5) a move of two winter term courses to the fall term. The most difficult part of this contingency plan is the requirement to take two courses during the Summer 2020 term—an unplanned event that will likely interfere with other plans you had made that may or may not still be in play given the present circumstances. It is not possible to teach these courses in May, substituting directly for your practicum, because the instructors need time to prepare the on-line materials and we need time to obtain the necessary My Courses access and other facilities that are needed from the university. We



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anticipate that the course will require four weeks some time in July or August 2020. If you have not done so already, you should register for your spring practicum anyway so that you can receive a grade for it in the future. We will let you know whether you will need to register for any additional school terms. We are discussing the tuition implications with the university.

Continuing with the contingency plan, I will provide a brief outline of the plan that is proposed for the second-year class, should the summer internship be canceled. This is an easier plan to understand but one that has much more disappointing implications for the students who will be impacted. The plan is to simply shift the planned summer internship to the fall term. It is not known however whether the exact same internship placement that was offered to you for Summer 2020 can still go ahead during Fall 2020. Every effort will be made to maintain the same placements, but substitutions may be required. If you have not already done so, you should register now for your Summer internship so that you can be graded on it later. If you will need to register for an additional fall term, we will let you know. The tuition implications of being forced to register for an extra “non-thesis extension” are known to us and we are discussing this possibility with the university now in order to identify mitigation strategies. Even more damaging, this plan means that you would not graduate in time. You also would not be ready to write the entry-to-practice exam when it is supposed to be held (SLP programs across Canada are in discussion with CAASPR about that particular problem). Some of you who have jobs lined up conditional on graduation will not be able to progress to those jobs in September as anticipated.

We have been working very hard these past two weeks to identify solutions to the many problems this COVID-19 crisis creates for you. We feel that this contingency plan is the most feasible option but recognize that nonetheless, this is an unexpected and dramatic change in programming. You may experience a variety of emotional reactions, financial impacts, and disappointed hopes for your immediate future. Don't hesitate to communicate your concerns by email or request a Zoom meeting with me, your advisor, your Coordinator of Clinical Education, or a support person in the Well Office if you need to talk with someone. In the meantime, we will stay alert to every possibility to start your clinical placements as soon as possible. You should know that this is the worst-case scenario but it is also a very likely scenario that will be experienced by you, your classmates and many if not all other speech-language pathology students in Canada.

My best hopes for your health and wellness,

Susan

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